



Thursday, May 30, 2019



Rosa Nussbaum (<https://rosanussbaum.com/work/maiden-voyage/>) (M.F.A., Studio Art, 2018) is a former UT graduate student and lecturer whose work is often created as performance sculpture, allowing both artist and audience to engage within the work. Nussbaum's solo show *Horizonland*, on display through June 6 at Women & Their Work gallery in Austin, explores Texas through the car as lens, and was recently described (<https://sightlinesmag.org/wow-thats-amazing-rosa-nussbaums-horizonland>) as “the best exhibit I’ve seen this year” by Sightlines art reviewer and

artist Annelyse Gelman. Nussbaum will perform as the car hosting an artist talk (<https://womenandtheirwork.org/upcoming/rosa-nussbaum-2/>) **at the gallery Saturday, June 1. This summer, Nussbaum will complete a six-week artist residency at RAIR** (<http://rairphilly.org/>) **(Recycled Artist in Residency) in Philadelphia.**

WHAT DOES *HORIZONLAND* ENTAIL?

My show *Horizonland* at Women & Their Work (<https://womenandtheirwork.org/>) explores Texas through the car as lens. When I moved here, I started from the position of passenger, unable to drive. I stared out of the window, the car focusing and reshaping the world around me; an orientation device, the freeway's camera tracks, speeding me through a predetermined choreography of orientation. I took photographs from this position of dependence, trying to bring this orientation into my work in a more literal, experiential way.

I think of *Horizonland* as the theme park of my dependence, of things seen in passing and not quite understood. The show is also a sort of anti-Futurist Manifesto, pushing back against the macho narrative that has surrounded the car in the visual arts. Here the car isn't a throbbing symbol of virile independence but soft and sticky and embarrassed.

It is my first solo gallery show, and I'm really lucky to have it at Women & Their Work. They're a great space, incredibly supportive of experimental work, and I think their mission of promoting female-identifying artists in Texas is important. Gallery Director Rachel Stuckey (M.F.A., Studio Art, 2016) really pushed and encouraged me to make all the new work I've made. It has been very rewarding to expand my audience and have so many people connect with the work.

I also felt very lucky to have gotten to work with Austin-based performer p1nkstar in my performance as car and to have shown my recent collaborative video book with my friend and collaborator Kevin Brophy titled *Rosa Nussbaum & Kevin Brophy's Keeping Young & Living Longer: How to stay Active & Healthy past 100, or How to avoid Life Shortening Errors by Rosa Nussbaum and Kevin Brophy*.



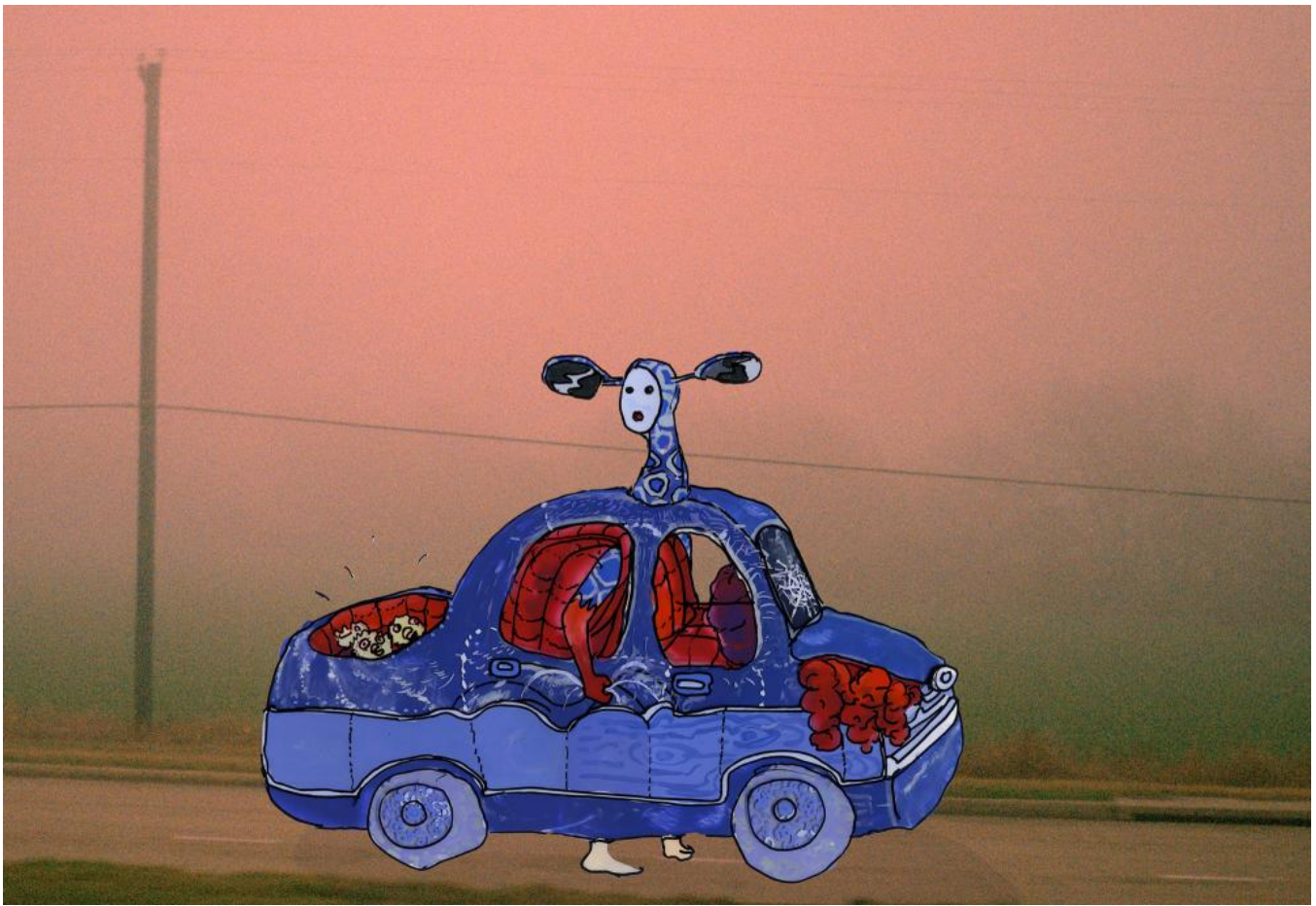
Rosa Nussbaum works on the foam car in her Austin apartment for her exhibition, Horizonland.

HOW HAVE YOUR EXPERIENCES INFORMED YOUR WORK?

I grew up in Germany and lived in the UK. My parents are both healthcare workers employed by the state; a direct link in the chain that connects the taxpayers to the government to the bodies of people around me. During that time, I felt like everything was connected. I thought of my work as just a small gesture that made the web of the world vibrate, like flicking the edge of a wine glass and making it go “ping.”

When I moved to Texas, I didn’t just move away from my family, but also the extended family of the state. I felt like there was no society, nothing that held people together, no web of mutual dependence and responsibility; nothing for my work to simply set in motion. I began building my own self-contained worlds and fractured narratives, played more with the language of storytelling, and science fiction, where previously I had used corporate or pop culture aesthetics.

Another big change in my practice was my use of my voice and body as a performer in my work. My race, accent and gender suddenly meant something entirely different, flattened into a cliché of Britishness, a kind of fictional, colonial hyper-femininity. I have had to re-evaluate my body as material.



An illustration of the foam car Rosa Nussbaum built for her exhibition, Horizonland.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES AT UT, BOTH AS STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR?

I really feel like I learned to see. Coming from the UK context, I had learned to read art for all its signifiers, little vectors of reference pointing out into the world. At UT, I learned from both my peers and my professors to consider the affective qualities of the material, to have present, sensory relationships to objects.

I loved showing my students art they had never seen and in turn see them making new things. It is rewarding seeing how students progressed and pushed themselves beyond their perceived limit. I think I still have a lot to learn about teaching in general and being in the institutional context in particular. I have no interest in being an authority figure, and I think grading in an art school is very unproductive. I think in time I will learn how to create a world in the classroom that does not let these pressures affect it.

Teaching as an adjunct is precarious and offers little stability. I hope for myself and for my colleagues who love teaching, that universities in the U.S. move toward more sustainable employment practices.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR STUDENTS?

Be excited and don't doubt yourself and be weird. Find your people who are the same kind of weird and make art with and for them. Dress more interestingly. Take health and safety seriously and work toward a practice that won't poison you. It's not an easy life, be sure you actually want this (there is no shame in doing something else and having art as a hobby). There really are no rules, you can do anything you like and frame it as art practice.

Check out this [great video \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JneldOWoS3Y\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JneldOWoS3Y) created by Women & Their Work of Nussbaum's Horizonland.

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